United Nations E/1999/44

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 April 1999

Original: English

Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5–30 July 1999
Item 13 (f) of the provisional agenda*
Economic and environmental questions: women in development

Executive summary of the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development

Note by the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–8	2
II.	Conceptual framework	9–22	3
	1. Gender mainstreaming	9–14	3
	2. Gender and economic development	15–20	3
	3. Current status of women	21–22	4
III.	Global trends: a historical perspective	23–32	4
IV.	Major trends in the world of work	33–43	6
	1. Casualization and feminization of labour	33–36	6
	2. Privatization and devolution	37–39	6
	3. Privatization and the commercialization of agriculture	40–43	7
V.	The nature and impact of globalization	44–62	7
	1. Globalization of trade, production and capital flows	44–49	7
	2. Gender-differentiated employment effects of globalization	50–58	8
	3. Changing patterns of migration	59–62	9
VI.	Conclusion and policy recommendations	63–65	10

* E/1999/100.

99-11544 (E) 120599

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 35/78 of 5 December 1980, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a multisectoral and interdisciplinary world survey on the role of women in development, in close collaboration with appropriate United Nations organizations and agencies, and in resolution 36/74 of 4 December 1981, to submit it to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.

2. In resolution 36/127 of 14 December 1981, the General Assembly requested that the Commission on the Status of Women be consulted in the preparation of the world survey. In resolution 37/60 of 3 December 1982, the General Assembly recommended that the survey should be submitted to the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. In 1985, the General Assembly, by its resolution 40/204, requested the Secretary-General to update the survey on a regular basis and to submit the first update to the General Assembly in 1989.[1]

3. The second update of the world survey was requested by the General Assembly in resolutions 44/77 of 8 December 1989 and 44/171 of 19 December 1989. It was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, in 1994 (A/49/378). In accordance with Commission on the Status of Women resolution 36/8 of 20 March 1992, the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* was one of the principal documents prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/108, a preliminary summary of the *World Survey* was provided to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994, through the Commission on the Status of Women.

4. A third update of the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* was requested by the General Assembly in its resolutions 40/204 and 49/161. In resolution 49/161, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to examine the impact of current trends and policies on the overall economic and social situation on women. It further requested that particular emphasis be given to the adverse impact of the difficult economic situation affecting the majority of developing countries, in particular, the condition of women. Special attention was to be devoted to the worsening conditions for the incorporation of women into the labour force and the impact of reduced expenditures for social services on women's opportunities for education, health and child care. Through its review of the status of women, the update should contribute to the debate on current goals and strategies of development and their implications for women and society as a whole.

5. The current *Survey* examines three dimensions of economic development — reallocation of resources, adjustment costs, creation of new resources — in the context of the following contemporary major trends it identifies in the world of work.

(a) The casualization and informalization of employment;

(b) Increased participation of women in paid work;

(c) Downsizing of the State and social expenditures, and the growing importance of unpaid work;

(d) Increasing privatization and commercialization of agriculture.

6. It comprises five chapters. Chapter I introduces the *Survey*, along with a conceptual and historical background to gender as a category of analysis. Chapter II presents a brief global overview of women's status in relation to the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action,[2] with the objective of assessing the progress women have made over recent decades.

7. The four major labour-market trends outlined above in paragraph 5 are described and discussed in chapter III, while chapter IV examines those global forces and processes that are thought to have contributed to the five trends. More specifically, in chapter IV, discussion focuses on globalization of trade and capital flows, the changing role of the State, new information technologies, and changing patterns of labour mobility and migration. Together, chapters III and IV constitute the core of the *Survey*. Chapter V concludes with a general discussion of policy recommendations.

8. The main topics discussed and analysed in the 1999 *World Survey* are introduced in the present preliminary executive summary, and possible directions for further research are indicated. The summary is intended to encourage comments that might be of help in the completion of the *Survey*, for submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session (1999), through the Economic and Social Council.

II. Conceptual framework

1. Gender mainstreaming

9. The 1990s are known as a time of global conferences convened by the United Nations to address global developmental concerns and to link national problems with policies and actions at the international level. Each conference adopted a programme of action that shaped the United Nations understanding of the multidimensional nature of development and reflected the growth in understanding of the concept of gender and its impact on the discourse of development.

10. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, was of crucial importance, as it clearly formulated women's issues in terms of gender. The transition of the focus from women to gender is at its core a transition from linking women to a wide policy agenda to embedding gender analysis within all policies and shifting priorities in ways that permit alliances of those who work together on equitable, gender-balanced, sustainable development.

11. This approach goes beyond ensuring women's participation to empowering women and men to contribute to the determination of a development agenda from the very beginning of its formulation to the stage of its implementation. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action explicitly endorsed that approach as the strategy of gender mainstreaming. The Platform for Action emphasized that Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively. That mandate was reaffirmed by the General Assembly in resolution 50/203, on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

12. In 1997, the Economic and Social Council defined mainstreaming a gender perspective as "... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experience an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve the gender equality".[3]

13. Gender mainstreaming requires cross-disciplinary knowledge of the inequalities between women and men as the basis for political, economic and social decisions. In addition, in order to be effective, gender mainstreaming involves a broad range of actors and institution-wide responsibilities with political commitment at the very top leading, in the long run, to institutional transformation.

14. From the perspective of the *World Survey*, the applicability of this definition to economic development and policies is of critical importance.

2. Gender and economic development

15. Gender is usually defined as the *social* meanings given to biological sex differences. It is a social and cultural construct, but it is also reproduced within the realm of material practices and, in turn, influences the outcomes of such practices. In economic life, gender is the basis for a very basic division of labour within most societies: the division between productive and reproductive activities. Productive activities refer to income-generating activities, generally linked to the market. Reproductive activities refer to activities for the care and development of people. Biological differences determine who gives birth to children, but they in themselves cannot explain why women should also be predominantly responsible for looking after children, caring for the sick, the elderly and, in short, for maintaining the social fabric and reproductive labour. Depending on place and time, these activities can range from shopping, preparing food, cleaning and sanitation, to repairing and mending, and collecting fuel and water. But, whatever their exact composition, in most societies and throughout history, they are carried out mostly by women under conditions of unpaid labour. This is in contrast to productive work that finds remuneration in the market, which is done mostly by men.[4]

16. The fact that women are primarily responsible for reproductive labour is a social, rather than a biological, phenomenon which is explained only by gender relations — that is, by the sum of social customs, conventions and practices that regulate the multifaceted relationship between men and women in a given society. It is in this sense that one can discuss the construction of a gender identity for both men and women and see that men are, as much as women, affected by gender relations — but of course, not in the same way. The asymmetry of power between men and women remains a pervasive trait of gender relations throughout the world. Within the family, for instance, gender inequality in the distribution of resources, decision-making and the

allocation of the labour of family members is usually the rule, rather than the exception.

17. Economists agree that sustainable development ultimately involves three important processes, in all of which gender relations play an important role:

(a) Reallocation of resources from low to high productivity uses;

(b) Minimizing the environmental and social costs of economic change and dislocation;

(c) Building a capacity to generate new resources.

18. A growing literature shows that gender biases and inequalities in the labour market, in access to credit, in the distribution of wealth and income and in decision-making act as barriers to the effective and productive use of human resources in meeting human needs. For instance, many economists today agree that gender inequalities in the control of resources in agriculture constrained the output responses that structural adjustment policies were designed to induce in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s. The success of those policies was also compromised, it is now argued, by the pervasive restrictions on the mobility of female labour. This is now seen as a common problem in many parts of the world. Women are still subject to household restrictions that, though not sanctioned by law, emanate from social norms and conventions. Thus, as a rule, it is not uncommon for women not to have full command and control over their own labour and property.

19. Likewise, there is also the recognition that if the burden of economic change is borne disproportionately by women, economic development is unlikely to be sustainable. Rapid economic change creates adjustment costs, and closer integration with world markets leads to increased volatility. In a period of diminishing social expenditures, increasing social insecurity and uncertainty, the family/household becomes the last refuge of those who lose their jobs and livelihood because of economic restructuring. Women bear a disproportional burden as the family becomes the main provider of social protection. These costs remain invisible and thus difficult to identify because of the unpaid nature of female household labour.

20. Finally, in relation to the generation of new resources and growth, there has been renewed emphasis on human capital in recent years. Economists now single out human (capital) resources as the most important variable in growth performance across different countries. It is thus not surprising that discriminatory gender practices in education, training and health services seem to have adverse long-term economic effects, as some studies have already begun to document. These studies suggest that total output could be increased considerably by eliminating gender discrimination in economic life.

3. Current status of women

21. The *1999 World Survey* provides a synoptic and statistical outline of the current economic and social status of women and of some emerging trends in the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action.[2] Based on existing data, it highlights the areas where visible progress has been achieved, compared to the situation three decades ago. It identifies the areas where challenges still persist and where some new issues are emerging. With regard to the sources of data and indicators, the 1999 *Survey* relies on the data available in the United Nations system but, whenever necessary, makes use of information generated by other sources.

22. The *Survey* also presents the ongoing debate on data, indicators and gender equality. A review of the recent literature on the subject shows that growing attention has been given to gender-sensitive indicators by Governments, the United Nations, researchers and non-governmental organizations. It also indicates the importance of such indicators for measuring changes in the status and roles of women and men and their gender-specific contributions to society.

III. Global trends: a historical perspective

23. The major world economic trend of recent years is the movement towards a globally integrated economy. In all parts of the world, the economic environment within which businesses, Governments and individuals make decisions increasingly includes an international dimension. The forces of globalization are real, and their influence is felt everywhere, for better or for worse.

24. In the past few years, "globalization" has become a catchall term used to refer to these various phenomena and to the processes of change towards global economic integration. It lacks a neat academic definition but usually covers the closely related, but distinct, economic concepts of openness, or liberalization, integration and interdependence. It thus entails a movement towards a world economy characterized by free trade, free mobility of both financial and real capital, and rapid diffusion of products, technologies, information and consumption patterns.

25. The past 50 years have been notable as a period of sustained and cumulative openness in the policy stance of countries throughout the world. Governments have adopted an increasingly open stance towards the world economy and in greater numbers have sought to reduce barriers and divisions between economic activity within their national boundaries and beyond. They lowered tariffs and other barriers to international trade and removed controls on foreign exchange transactions to promote the free flow of goods and capital. The shift towards greater openness in relation to all forms of capital flows seems to have gained much greater momentum within the past decade. It has been especially pronounced in the developing countries, if only because hitherto they were much less open than developed countries.

26. A multitude of factors were important in this trend towards greater openness in the developing world. First was the scrutiny of the spectacular growth and development successes of the fast growing East Asian economies (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan Province of China and the Republic of Korea). The rapidity and sustained nature of their growth was often attributed to their strength in exports, especially in manufactured exports.

27. The second factor has been the policy leverage exercised in the direction of liberalization by the international community. A number of developing countries which were caught in the web of a debt crisis and facing severe balance-of-payment difficulties in the 1980s had little choice but to implement austerity policies and liberalize their economies along the lines promoted by the World Bank and the IMF. These programmes comprised, on the one hand, short-term austerity measures aimed at keeping aggregate demand under control to lower inflation and curb budget and current-account deficits and, on the other, long-term policies designed to carry out trade liberalization, deregulation and privatization.

28. By the late 1980s, it became apparent that the welfare costs of adjustment were substantial and that those costs were being borne disproportionately by the most vulnerable segments of the population. From country to country, evidence began to accumulate, showing the adverse impacts on the poor and especially on women in poor households. Women and the poor were forced to make do with a much diminished budget in provisioning their household and family needs. It was found that women significantly increased their participation in the labour force, often in informal employment under insecure and worsening conditions of work, and had to increase their unpaid domestic labour in the face of falling incomes. In other words, women absorbed the shock by working longer and harder, both inside and outside the household. However, their welfare visibly suffered as the increased burden of work exerted a heavy toll on their physical and mental health.

29. Growing international concern over the negative welfare effects of economic adjustment on women had prompted the General Assembly to pass resolution 49/161 in which it requested the Secretary-General to examine the impact of current trends and policies on the overall economic and social situation of women. As mentioned above, the Assembly further requested that particular emphasis be given to the adverse impact of the difficult economic situation affecting the majority of developing countries, in particular the condition of women. The erosion in women's health, educational opportunities and the poor conditions under which they were incorporated into the labour force were the main issues to be examined.

30. The present (third) update of the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* sets out to fulfil the request voiced in resolution 49/161 by reflecting on the current goals and strategies of development and their implications for women and society as a whole. It finds that, along with new economic opportunities, globalization has also been responsible for increased economic volatility, ever greater risks for producers, job insecurity and loss of livelihood for many.

31. In relation to these diverse trends caused in part by globalization, the *Survey* examines two interrelated questions:

(a) How do gender differences affect the way in which developing countries cope with the rapid economic changes currently under way in the world economy, and who bears the costs of economic restructuring?

(b) How are gender differences and relations themselves (and the social status of women) transformed by the same economic changes unleashed by globalization?

32. Much of the controversy about globalization stems not from disagreement about the objective nature of the changes under way but from disagreement about their social and economic impact. While some observers are persuaded of the generally progressive character of globalization, others see the potential benefits dwarfed by much actual harm and thus give greater weight to the risks entailed. However, women's well-being, though important in its own right, is not the sole concern of the *Survey*. The important effects of gender differences and relations on the process of development are highlighted as well.

IV. Major trends in the world of work

1. Casualization and feminization of labour

33. Beginning with the early 1980s, industrial firms in developed countries have found themselves in a difficult economic environment. In a world market characterized by increasing trade liberalization, they faced intensified external competition and product market volatility. They developed a two-pronged strategy to deal with these difficulties. On the one hand, they tried to lower costs, especially those associated with labour and, on the other, took measures to enhance their capacity to adapt to unexpected changes in market conditions and consumer demand. That meant investing in new technology, outsourcing labour-intensive production processes to the informal sector or relocating them to developing countries and, more importantly, reorganizing production at the firm level. The reorganizing of production, in turn, led to a drive towards deregulation at the macro level — i.e., elimination of protective regulations and labour-market institutions that were seen to impede free functioning of the labour market.

34. In many countries the result of the drive towards deregulation was a fragmented labour market. More and more workers were no longer covered by standard labour legislation, either because the Government had not enforced regulations or had abolished regulations, or because enterprises had been able to circumvent them. Much of new employment involved atypical, often precarious, forms of work. Informal economic activities, subcontracting, part-time work, self-employment etc. — all proliferated, and the rate of unionization declined. It is argued that those labour market developments have been responsible for much of the upward trend in the female share of the labour force.

35. Women from poor families, in particular, have increasingly allocated their time to paid employment, accepting any kind of work available in their home countries or abroad so as to help contribute to family incomes, often at the expense of household work, family care and their own leisure time. The flexibility associated with female time and effort had eased labour-market deregulation and enhanced the capacity of business enterprises to adapt to changing market conditions.

36. The new and enlarged role of women in the labour market has not, however, been an entirely positive development for the women themselves. Despite their entry into paid employment in large numbers, they still have primary responsibility for housework and child care. Moreover, the increase in the quantity of women's employment has not been matched by improvements in the quality of employment. Even though some women have been able to break into better jobs that were previously male-dominated, the majority of women have ended up with low-paying jobs with little, if any, training opportunities or promotion prospects. Thus, it is not surprising that, in many countries, female labour is still seen as easily available when needed and dispensable when it is not. Although all workers, both men and women, have become more vulnerable to market fluctuations with the increased insecurity and instability of irregular work, women's position seem to have become relatively more precarious because they are less likely to be covered by labour regulations and collective bargaining.

2. Privatization and devolution

37. The State can influence the lives of working women in its capacity as the regulator of employment conditions, an employer, and/or as provider (or mediating agent in the distribution) of social services. In some countries and localities, the Government is the single largest employer of women in the formal sector, mainly in occupations associated with health and education. In almost all industrial countries, and also to a lesser extent in developing countries, the public sector has been associated with the provision of more progressive family friendly policies such as parental leave and assistance with child care and flexi-time policies.

38. Yet privatization of State-owned enterprises and devolution of social services to private and non-profit organizations have become common trends around the world in recent years.

39. Because women in general face greater difficulties in finding new employment after losing their jobs, downsizing and privatization of public services have had a disproportional impact on women's employment prospects. Moreover, there is reason to believe that, as the State reduces its involvement in social services, the burden shifts onto the community and the family. That in turn has meant a disproportional increase in the demand for women's unpaid labour in the household. According to a UNDP study involving 31 industrial and developing countries, women spend roughly two thirds of their total work time in unpaid activities and one third in paid activities. On the other hand, the proportions are reversed for men: two thirds of worktime spent for paid employment in industrial countries and three fourths in developing countries; and one third and one quarter of worktime spent, respectively, for unpaid work.

3. Privatization and the commercialization of agriculture

40. In most developing countries market relations have been expanding in agriculture, with diverse gender effects on subsistence production, modernization, food security, and household survival strategies. In many countries, the drive towards privatization of natural resources, concomitant to market expansion, is also having gender and class-differentiated effects. Although land markets are in theory open to everyone, poor rural people, especially women, are unable to take advantage of the market system because they lack three essentials: information about new laws and programmes; the money to purchase land; and access to credit. Women are particularly disadvantaged because of the male biases in property relations, inheritance laws and access to the legal system.

41. With increasing dependence on the market for both inputs and the sale of output, producers have been switching from subsistence production to cash crops. In many regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, subsistence production is fast becoming the exclusive domain of women, since men are first to abandon it for cash crops. Women are, as a result, being forced to take over tasks customarily carried out by men in food production, such as land preparation and tilling, in addition to being expected to contribute to cash crop production. However, income from cash crops is almost exclusively controlled by men, and women are in general not adequately compensated for their contribution to the production of those crops.

42. In certain regions, commercialization is speeding up the introduction of new technologies into agriculture, and production processes are becoming mechanized and intensified. Farm productivity and income rise, but the need for manual labour is reduced as a result. This affects women wage workers disproportionally, because they are generally concentrated in low-skilled and low-paying jobs, and new employment opportunities created by mechanization mostly benefit men.

43. Commercialization also has direct and indirect adverse effects on nutrition and household food security. The direct effects emanate from increased dependence on the market, which renders households vulnerable to price fluctuations in commodity markets. The indirect effects are linked to the erosion in that part of household income controlled by women. Because women's income is most often used for food and other basic necessities, their ability to provide food through subsistence production is diminished with commercialization, even if income from cash crops is increasing.

V. The nature and impact of globalization

1. Globalization of trade, production and capital flows

44. In discussions of the movement towards a globally integrated world economy, the two major trends that are singled out for emphasis are the increased volume of international trade and the exponential growth in private capital flows. While the increase in trade has been an ongoing trend for the past 50 years, the exponential growth of private capital flows, especially since 1990, is relatively more recent. In response to intensified competition in the global market place, employers have resorted to cost-minimizing strategies on an international basis. This has involved taking labour-intensive jobs to where cheap labour is available and moving rented labour to where jobs can be found. This phenomenon, coupled with financial liberalization, has meant that capital is gaining unprecedented mobility compared to labour, which is further constrained by ever more vigilant immigration controls.

45. Nineteenth-century technological advances facilitated trade by improving the means and reducing the cost of physical transportation. Likewise, the contemporary power of computers and of new systems of digitized information transfer and telecommunications permits the almost instantaneous transfer and manipulation of data and financial instructions over great distances. Together with the relaxation of controls on foreigners[2] participation in national financial markets under liberalization, international financial flows have multiplied in dramatic fashion as a result.

46. The nature of international financial flows has changed considerably. Until the early 1980s, official flows accounted for the bulk of international capital flows, mostly in the form of official aid grants and loans. But official flows are now of lesser value than private flows. Private debts, securities, bonds, currencies, futures contracts and other forms of derivative financial instruments are now all traded internationally, to a huge extent quite independently of actual physical trade.

47. Private financial flows come in a great range of maturities. The most long-term component is foreign direct investment (FDI), while the most short-term is portfolio investment involving holdings of financial assets and short-

term bank loans. The main components of private financial flows are thus:

(a) Foreign direct investment (FDI);

(b) Private portfolio investment, usually involving the purchase of equities and corporate and government bonds on the local stock market;

(c) Bank loans of various maturities to the private sector, of which some — but only some — may be project- or FDI-related, the rest being non-earmarked loans to domestic banks.

48. FDI is often the catalytic factor whose importance for developing countries has risen since the 1980s. It now is more than twice the value of portfolio investment, providing in aggregate at least 40 per cent of the total outside finance available to developing countries and around 7 per cent of all gross fixed capital formation in those countries.

49. In addition to the dramatic quantitative increase in its magnitude since the early 1990s, FDI flows have also been subject to important qualitative transformations. As a stylized picture, three distinct phases can be conceptualized in the evolution of FDI flows. The first phase involves setting up replicas of headquarters operations in other locations in self-sufficient units that either process and export local natural resources or produce goods for local markets. During the second phase, labour-intensive stages (or types) of production in multinational corporations operations are devolved to free-standing production units in low-wage countries. The third and latest phase involves the emergence of global production networks, signifying a movement towards a truly supra-national global economy. It is characterized by close functional integration between the geographically dispersed parts of the multinational firm and new modes of linkages among different international firms.

2. Gender-differentiated employment effects of globalization

50. Trade liberalization and FDI flows have been extensively studied in terms of their gender-differentiated employment effects. In both first-tier and second-tier export-led industrializers, the orientation of manufacturing production towards exports has led to a significant increase in the share of female workers in the export industries. Indeed, none of those countries has increased its exports of manufactures without recourse to women workers. It is by now considered a well-known fact that industrialization in the context of globalization is as much female-led as it is export-led.

51. In some of those countries the increase in female employment represents a huge leap forward in women's engagement in the money economy. For instance, in 1978, there were four garment factories in Bangladesh; by 1995, there were 2,400, employing 1.2 million workers. Ninety per cent were women under the age of 25 years, and the sector employed 70 per cent of women in wage employment in the country. Though Bangladesh is perhaps an extreme case, many other countries also have seen dramatic increases both in export manufacturing capacity and in the number and share of women in the manufacturing labour force: the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, Mauritius and Tunisia are cases in point. In general, the stronger the concentration of exports on labour-intensive goods, such as clothing, semiconductors, toys, sports goods, and shoes, the higher tends to be the proportion of women workers.

52. However, the share of women in export manufacturing seems to reach a peak and then decline. The decline is associated with diversification of the export product mix towards higher value-added, more technologically demanding product categories and the increasing capital intensity of production technologies. It appears that, as jobs and wages improve in quality, women tend to be excluded from them. This may indicate a reversion to previous patterns of male-dominated employment in industry, with gender stereotyping of jobs in high technology and capital-intensive operations reminiscent of the pattern of labour use in protected, domestically oriented industries. It suggests that the employment gains to women from globalization may be limited both in time and in kind, with women workers confined indefinitely to low-skill low-wage occupations in industry.

53. But, in addition to export-oriented manufacturing, the rapidly expanding international financial services sector also appears to employ a high proportion of female workers. This certainly appears to be the case with respect to the more low-skill applications in that sector, such as data entry. Since at least the mid-1980s, corporations in data-reliant services, such as credit card providers, mail order businesses, airlines and rail systems, have sent transaction data to be processed offshore. The Caribbean and some South-East Asian countries are established centres for that kind of business. The labour force in those businesses has at least as high a proportion of women workers as the export manufacturing sector in general and is almost completely female in the case of the Caribbean.

54. Other customized, business services using higher skills, such as software design, computer programming and financial services (banking and insurance), are also increasingly relocated to developing countries and employ relatively high proportions of women in the workforce, even at higher grades. There is not enough consolidated data on employment in this sector to establish its worldwide importance or trends. But it is clear that in some countries new forms of service employment are echoing the gender impact of expansion in the export sector of manufacturing, providing relatively large numbers of relatively well paid jobs for women.

55. Also important is the multiplier effect of trade-related employment creation for women in the informal sector (i.e., in home-based and small-scale enterprises below the threshold size for registered enterprises, the exact size varying among countries). Although no global estimate is available of the scale of this multiplier, it is thought to be substantial. The multiplier effect can however also work in reverse, with import expansion. The direct effects are negative in this case. Local producers lose market share to cheaper imports and reduce their employment, as a result. Imports are likely to displace women disproportionately in the informal sector both as workers, because of their higher numbers in the sector, and also as small entrepreneurs, because they are more likely to be ill-equipped to upgrade their productive activities.

56. The gender-differentiated employment effects of trade liberalization and FDI flows have been assessed in three main ways. First, the integration thesis stresses the positive consequences of new job creation for women in trade-related production activities, primarily in terms of the human development benefits to which it gives rise for society as a whole. According to this view, paid employment is in itself an important factor for women's status, enhancing the autonomy and influence of women within the household.

57. A second approach, the exploitation thesis, while accepting that trade expansion has created new types of employment for women, stresses its negative features from a gender perspective. Employment conditions in export processing zones are described in the exploitation thesis in terms of their negative aspects: extremely long hours, little training, non-recognition of seniority payments, harsh systems of industrial discipline, wages at the bottom end of the range for industrial workers in the surrounding economy, and insecurity of employment.

58. Finally, the third, or marginalization thesis, focuses not so much on the characteristics of trade-related employment as on the contingent way in which women labour is mobilized into the market. It argues that women enter paid work in the labour force in a disadvantaged position even in the absence of legal restrictions and pure discrimination. Employers might feel themselves justified in being reluctant to hire women for jobs that involve firm specific knowledge and training, for fear that the women might leave unexpectedly because of their maternal responsibilities, or offer lower pay to women to compensate for their higher expected turnover rate. As a result, women tend to cluster in low-paying and low-skill jobs where high turnover does not matter as much or in those lines of work that do not clash with their reproductive responsibilities.

3. Changing patterns of migration

59. As capital becomes progressively more internationalized, labour is being restricted to its own national and ethnic boundaries. But, at the same time, when labour-intensive jobs cannot be taken where cheap labour is available, rented workers are being moved to where jobs are found. Thus, instead of permanent population movements, a temporary/seasonal, short-term, contracted migration pattern seems to be on the rise.

60. On the one hand, under conditions of a cash economy, land has lost its primacy in providing a livelihood for rural people. Therefore, pressure to leave the land has become greater than ever before. Ironically, places to go have become scarce. On the other hand, the increasing significance of non-farm income has made small and marginal production units on land sustainable and thus has the effect of connecting the rural-to-urban and international migration patterns in their dependence to the global market. Instead of uprooting the family from its permanent place of residence, many would-be migrants find it preferable to maintain dual, sometimes triple, residences, and conventional dichotomies of rural/urban, agriculture/industry, proletariat/peasantry are becoming blurred.

61. Many households are responding to the uncertainties created by the increased dependence on the market by restructuring the only familiar resource at their disposal: their household labour force. The actual adaptive patterns vary significantly across the globe. However, the underlying principle of the survival strategies developed by households in their effort to cope with the uncertainties of the market economy and the lack of an efficient formal/legal institutional structure is, in most cases, the same: diversification of the household resource base through the restructuring of the household division of labour.

62. Through the restructuring of the household division of labour, some members of the household remain on the land (or the home base), freeing others to seek work elsewhere. Depending upon the prevailing norms and conventions of gender relations, household strategies may favour either male or female migration. The concepts of feminization of agriculture and feminization of migration have been used by researchers to conceptualize the obverse outcomes of a similar survival strategy adopted by households in diverse regions. In the Middle East and Africa, women have generally taken over the work on the land, freeing male members of the household to migrate in search of work elsewhere, while in Latin America and Asia, women for a long time have been the principal labour migrants, internally as well as internationally.

VI. Conclusion and policy recommendations

63. The gender impact of globalization is complex, and the effects are mixed. Globalization represents a new form of intensification of market-driven activity. It does not generally relieve or overturn the gender-based discriminatory forces that characterize every stage of economic development. Nor does it, in general, tend to minimize gender inequalities. It might even in some circumstances exacerbate them.

64. In general, the governing principle for policy formulation in relation to the gender consequences of globalization should be to take measures that minimize or offset the damage resulting from negative impacts while trying to consolidate the benefits. For instance, when an agrarian economy successfully adopts an integration strategy based on exports of manufactures, its engagement with the world economy hastens the onset and speeds up the rate of the structural change of the economy towards industrialization. This shift is, on balance, beneficial to women and reduces gender inequality in a variety of ways. The increased economic autonomy of women gained through wage employment broadens women's social and life cycle options, improves their status within households, and ushers in all sorts of human developmental benefits, primarily by affecting their children's prospects and the family's purchasing power.

65. Thus, policies must be introduced to allow women workers to consolidate those benefits, through access to basic worker rights of freedom of association and freedom from discrimination and coercion according to the relevant ILO conventions. Moreover, the scale of informal-sector activity and its involvement in international markets, directly or indirectly, needs to be better appreciated. Women constitute the majority of those who work in the informal sector. Producer and worker associations, small business credit institutions and the extension of infrastructure all have a valuable part to play in enhancing productivity and incomes in the informal sector.

Notes

[1] *1989 World Survey of Women in Development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.IV.2).

[2] See report of the *Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.96.IV.13).

[3] A/52/3, chap. IV, sect. A: Agreed conclusions.

[4] However, this gender-based division of labour has not meant equal work burdens for men and women. Women's total work burden exceeds the work done by men in the world economy.